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Antipodes

A North American Journal
of Australian Literature

The Publication of the
American Association of
Australian Literary Studies

JUNE 1998



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EDITOR'S NOTES

Robert Ross

Would Matthew Arnold have used "problematic"? It has always been the policy of *Antipodes* to go lightly on editing the essays and reviews that are submitted by diligent and capable critics, who contribute their time and effort to make *Antipodes* a lively, interesting journal. It's sometimes necessary to make changes to conform with *Antipodes* style, but over-editing seems to me an intrusive act.

Recently, though, writers for *Antipodes* appear to have discovered a word that your editor really dislikes: that is, "problematic" — and its relatives, "problematicize" and "problematical" and "problematicalization." Certainly *Antipodes* has never received anything like the following, which appeared in a journal that will remain nameless:

This paper attempts to problematize the oppositional discourse that has resulted in the wake of *The Satanic Verses* imbroglio. In her informed analysis of the "novel event" (as she terms the scenario), ——— argues for a "third space" within which to articulate the problematic of the debate. It is too simplistic and ultimately "absolutist" and neo-imperialistic, she seems to be suggesting, to reduce various post-colonial, transnational responses to the implicit hegemony of western liberal humanism..., to a mere "Us" versus "Them" dichotomy. Even Rushdie's own "challenge" to Islam, she claims, must be located within a discursive space that addresses the fundamental complexity and ambiguity of a work that simultaneously challenges itself, Islam, and a western post-enlightenment modality.

So there! (I hope this writer never discovers the quotation, but probably he or she would not be able to identify it, because the vocabulary and style resemble so much recent critical writing.)

Once we academics, in our usual superiority, criticized business and the social sciences for jargon and overblown writing. But in recent years literary critics have fallen into the same trap — adding "ize" to most any word being just one such habit ("narrativize" and "hierarchize," for example). Perhaps this pseudo-scientific language, we hope, will make what we do sound more important and significant.

Maybe I am a out of date. But we should all ask ourselves occasionally, just as a test: Would Matthew Arnold have used "problematic"? •

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The
story
behind
the
cover
art

Keith Looby
Portrait of
A.D. Hope
1992-1993
173 x 111 cm
Oil on canvas



A.D. Hope and the artist Keith Looby

In 1992 The Australian National University decided that a portrait of A.D. Hope was of great importance for public recognition of Professor Hope's contribution to the University and to Australian arts. The prominent Australian artist, Keith Looby, was commissioned to paint the portrait. Several strategies were employed to raise funds for the purchase of the painting. Events such as the "Poets' Lunch," at which several poets presented poetry written for the occasion, raised both awareness and money. Private subscriptions and a substantial contribution by the ANU Staff Amenities Fund made up the remainder of the sum.

The portrait was entered and selected to be hung in the 1993 Archibald Prize exhibition, the most prestigious portrait painting competition in Australia. The painting now occupies pride of place in the A.D. Hope Building at The Australian National University, Canberra.

Keith Looby, born in Sydney in 1940, studied at the National Art School and then lived and studied in Europe between 1960 and 1967. He taught at the National Art School and worked as an art critic for the *National Times* before becoming a Creative Arts Fellow at ANU in 1973-74. He has continued a varied career as teacher, critic, writer, and artist in Australia and abroad since that time. Keith Looby is represented in all major Australian art collections and several of his paintings and prints are held in the ANU Art Collection. As a major Australian artist, Looby is well recognized for his distinctive and poignant style of portraiture.

Portrait of A.D. Hope was reproduced courtesy of The Australian National University. Photo by Stewart Hay.